

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/883,334  
Amendment dated March 9, 2004  
Reply to OA of September 9, 2003

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-45 (Canceled)

Claim 46 (Withdrawn): A surface-treating support member for supporting a plurality of works, comprising an upper cage and a lower cage including a plurality of compartments, so that the cages are openable and closeable in a lengthwise direction.

Claim 47 (Currently Amended): A process for surface-treating a plurality of works comprising the step of surface-treating the works in a treating chamber, while rotating the works about their axes in spaced apart states, wherein said rotation of the works is conducted with the works supported by a support member rotated about its axis, said support member comprising an upper cage and a lower cage, including a plurality of compartments, so that the cages are openable and closeable in a lengthwise direction, wherein each work is accommodated in a separate compartment in a manner where each work is spaced apart from one another.

Claim 48 (Previously Presented): A process for surface-treating a plurality of works according to claim 47, wherein said surface treatment is a vapor deposition on a sintered article.

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Claim 49 (Currently Amended): A process for surface-treating a plurality of works, comprising the step of surface-treating the works in a treating chamber, while ~~rotating~~ moving them along a circular path about a rotational axis in spaced-apart states, wherein said ~~rotation~~ moving of the works is carried out with the works supported by a support member ~~rotated~~ moved in a circular path about a rotational axis, the support member comprising an upper cage and a lower cage including a plurality of compartments, so that the cages are openable and closeable in a lengthwise direction ~~and so that~~ wherein each work ~~can be~~ is accommodated in a separate compartment in a manner where each work is spaced apart from one another.

Claim 50 (Previously Presented): A process for surface-treating a plurality of works according to claim 49, wherein said surface treatment is a vapor deposition on a sintered article.

Claim 51 (Currently Amended): A process for surface-treating a plurality of works, comprising the step of surface-treating the works in a treating chamber, while rotating them about their axes and moving them along a circular path about a rotational axis in spaced-apart states, wherein said rotation of the works about their axes and moving along a circular path about the rotational axis is carried out with the works supported by a support member, the support member comprising an upper cage and a lower cage including a plurality of compartments, so that the cages are openable and closeable in a lengthwise direction, wherein each work is accommodated in a separate compartment in a manner where each work is spaced apart from one another.

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Claim 52 (Previously Presented): A process for surface-treating a plurality of works according to claim 51, wherein said surface treatment is a vapor deposition on a sintered article.